



# Assessing Willingness to Pay for Conservation in Birdwatching Tourism: Insights from Dihing-Patkai National Park, Assam, India

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**Abstract.** Special Interest Tourism (SIT), such as birdwatching tourism, is gaining popularity worldwide. Dihing-Patkai National Park, located in Upper Assam, is becoming a popular destination for birdwatchers and photographers. Literature surveys consider birdwatchers among the most educated segments of different tourist genera, especially when it comes to environmental and conservation-related awareness. However, there are no or scant research when it comes to studying the relationship between birdwatcher's conservation awareness and their willingness to pay towards supporting conservation in biodiversity rich landscapes. This study aims to address this gap by studying the unique traits of birdwatchers that influence their willingness to pay (WTP) towards conservation, especially in biodiversity-rich ecosystems such as Dihing-Patkai National Park. The study introduced a quantitative research design integrating CFA, SEM, and factor analysis to examine the relationships (if any) between different variables. The findings highlight that Awareness of Conservation issues and the Perceived Value of Conservation positively impact birders' WTP. Unexpectedly, birders' conservation knowledge was negatively correlated with WTP. These vital findings are believed to provide valuable insights for park management to develop effective strategies that will help generate funding sources to facilitate conservation measures in the park.

**Keywords:** Willingness-to-Pay, Birdwatching Tourism, Dihing-Patkai National Park, Special Interest Tourism, Conservation Knowledge, Perceived Value for Conservation

## 1 Introduction

Birdwatching tourism that refers to watching birds in their natural habitat is one of the most sustainable form of tourism worldwide [1]. Birdwatchers, bird enthusiasts, photographers and conservationists are encouraged to explore unknown destinations to observe birds in their natural and indigenous habitats [2]. These types of nature-based tourism are gaining huge popularities in recent years especially in developing countries and this development can be attributed to advancement in optics like binoculars and spotting scopes, publication of fieldguides and advancement in photography[3]. Moreover, equipment availability and affordability, a growing number of bird-related TV documentaries, the availability of expert guides, a broader selection of birdwatching books, and more frequent birding festivals have also contributed in popularizing this trend[4]. As a result, birdwatchers are creating fresh economic opportunities in the tourism industry by visiting and staying in areas rich with birdlife [5].

Birders are thought to be distinct from birdwatchers, who participate in birdwatching activities on a casual basis. Birders are energetic, talented, and totally devoted people who go on journeys with the main goal of

viewing and photographing birds in natural settings, as well as researching birds and keeping lists of species observed on previous visits [6]. Birders choose to visit sites that aren't popular with tourists during the peak season or that don't have any other tourist attractions [7].

Previous studies have indicated that regions abundant in biodiversity are confronting substantial risks of extinction. Furthermore, research have shown that the rate of extinction has increased, especially on land masses, despite a historical clustering of extinctions on islands in the ocean. Principal causes of these extinctions were determined to be invasive alien species, hunting, and agriculture. The transition from island to continental extinctions is indicative of an increasing peril posed by the loss and dilapidation of habitats. This concerning pattern emphasises the immediate requirement for far more efficient conservation measures to avoid additional declines in bird diversity[8].

Biodiversity conservation and environmental protection are two critical concerns that demand immediate attention [9]. Protected Areas (PAs) are essential in this context because they serve as standards for understanding human interactions with the natural world. Today, PAs are the only hope to secure the survival of many threatened and endemic species from extinction [10]. National parks and other protected areas have been marked off, narrated, museumized, and branded for the interests of tourism and society since the notions of environmental conservation developed over a century ago [11]. Huge funding is needed for the construction and maintenance of these PAs [9]. PAs in developing countries are largely dependent on the governments of developed countries and non-governmental organisations for funding. This poses a number of problems, like heavy dependency on external funds for park management, displacement of management responsibility of the parks from government entities to special interest groups, etc. [12]. So, it is important for the park management to identify reliable sources of funding in the form of tourism charges, payment for ecological services, and entry fees to the parks. Studies have revealed that tourists are willing to pay more for biodiversity conservation and environmental protection [13].

### **1.1. Problem Statement:**

Over the past few years, Dihing-Patkai National Park has emerged as one of major birdwatching destinations of Assam. People from different parts of the world come to Dihing-Patkai every year to witness its rich bird diversity. However, despite its growing popularity and its potentials to emerge as a global birdwatching tourism destination, there has been no or very scant research to identify its potentials to contribute towards conservation efforts though generation of fund. As birdwatchers are considered among the most educated segment of tourists especially when it comes to conservation related awareness, there is limited understanding of how birders' awareness of environmental issues influence their willingness to financially support conservation initiatives. This understanding is even more important for a national park like Dihing-Patkai where conservation strategies often adversely impacted by inadequate funding and support from local and international visitors.

Past studies have emphasised on identifying the numbers of tourists who are willing to pay when it comes to supporting conservation of biodiversity and protection of the environment [14]. But there is limited research that tries to identify whether birdwatchers, who often possess higher education—both formal and in ecological understanding—and a deeper awareness of conservation challenges [15], are willing to support safeguarding and preserving biodiversity financially?

Therefore, this study tries address whether awareness of conservation issues among the birdwatchers impact their willingness to pay towards biodiversity conservation in Dihing-Patkai National Park? The study also tries to find answer to the question whether increased environmental awareness translate into higher willingness to pay to support conservation, especially in the case of Dihing-Patkai National Park? Answers to these questions are vital for designing an effective conservation strategy by maximising revenue earning from the tourists by the park management.

## 1.2. Research Gap:

This article aims at identifying birdwatchers' willingness to pay towards conservation in the biodiversity rich Dihing-Patkai National Park. Unlike previous studies that aimed at identifying the number of tourists who are willing to pay for supporting conservation initiatives, this study tries to find out the various traits that might influence birdwatchers' willingness to pay for conservation initiatives in DPNP. The research explores the relationship between birders' conservation awareness and their WTP towards supporting conservation efforts. As parks and other protected areas especially in developing economies like India are dependent on government and international institutions for funding, the outcome of this study can help the park management to identify their own funding sources and introduce effective conservation initiatives for sustainable tourism practices.

## 2. Literature Review:

In recent years, there has been a stiff rise in Nature-based tourism activities especially in birdwatching activities, attracting a wide range of enthusiasts from casual observers to expert birders and photographers. Research studies have highlighted the importance of segmenting this market particularly in terms of recreational specialization, which classifies birdwatchers on the basis of their level of interest and expertise. Based on this classification birdwatchers have been classified into two distinct groups, viz., casual and serious birdwatchers, each with unique behavioural traits and preferences that influence their travel decisions and destination choices. It has been observed that highly experienced birders, with extensive knowledge and commitment, often show greater interest towards supporting conservation initiatives and contribute more substantially to local economies through expenditures on travel, accommodations, and guided tours. Birdwatching has been a significant economic contributor in biodiversity-rich areas with well-developed tourism infrastructure [16].

Research studies have also identified motivational factors that encourage birdwatchers to undertake birdwatching expeditions. These six key identifying factors are: enjoyment, conservation, escape, achievement, status and social interactions. Recent studies have revealed that experienced and specialized birders are more motivated by conservation, social, and reputation aspects. This understanding is crucial for conservation efforts and citizen science initiatives [17]. Studies have also identified factors that influence birdwatchers' intentions to revisit certain destinations. The results indicate that the cognitive image has the greatest impact on the intention to revisit, with tourist satisfaction and perceived image being next in significance. Moreover, tourist motivation indirectly influences the intention to revisit through the mediating role of cognitive image. These findings are beneficial for policymakers and tourism managers aiming to improve birdwatching destinations [18].

Research studies have also highlighted the role of environmental awareness in conservation of biodiversity. Studies identify that increase in environmental awareness encourage conservation initiatives. Moreover, studies have revealed that increase in environmental awareness can also positively impact Willingness to pay for conservation. Biodiversity is recognized as crucial for the long-term sustainability of forest ecosystems, offering benefits such as aesthetic appeal, ecological functions, and species preservation [19].

There are studies that have examined the impact of attitude, behaviour, emotional connections, and environmental awareness significantly impacting one's willingness to pay. Results indicate that responsible behaviour and emotional affinity significantly influence WTP, while attitude, environmental awareness, and values have a relatively smaller impact. These findings suggest that policymakers should consider these factors when developing strategies to promote sustainable practices and conservation efforts in tourist destinations [20].

Environmental knowledge have been significant contributor towards tourists' willingness to pay towards conservation. Tourists with deeper understanding of the environment are more likely to financially contribute towards conservation efforts. Studies have identified that environmental policies focused on improving energy knowledge can boost willingness to pay (WTP) by increasing awareness of the benefits and urgency of environmental conservation [14]. Research by D. Qiao et. al [21] found a link between citizens' environmental awareness and their willingness to financially support ecological restoration in China. The study revealed a correlation between subjective knowledge of environmental issues and increased WTP for eco-friendly products. This is because subjective knowledge enhances individuals' perception of environmental risks and the importance of sustainable practices [22]. In order to avail public support for environmental policies and increasing financial contributions to conservation efforts it is important that efforts are made to improve ecological knowledge through education and awareness initiatives. Additionally, previous studies have shown that more experienced birdwatchers, who consider birdwatching a lifestyle rather than a hobby, tend to have a higher WTP for specialized tours and services [23].

Research on Ecotourism have indicated that perceived value significantly increases both tourists' intentions and their willingness to pay more (WTP) for ecotourism activities. Conversely, materialism negatively affects WTP, with this impact being influenced by tourist intention. The research suggests that marketing strategies should focus on segmenting the market based on visitors' materialistic tendencies and enhancing the unique imagery of ecological destinations [24]. Perceived values such as leisure, and economic value have a more substantial impact on willingness to pay (WTP) (Cortés-Espino et al., 2023).

By understanding these factors, governments and conservation organizations can develop targeted interventions to increase visitors' willingness to pay for conservation. These measures may include educational programs and highlighting both the emotional and tangible benefits of conservation efforts.

## 2.1. Gaps in Literature:

There is a significant literature gap that tries to identify correlation between birdwatchers heightened conservation awareness and their willingness to pay for conservation efforts within the framework of Dihing-Patkai National park.

While past research studies have tried to establish overall correlation between environmental consciousness and willingness to pay, and has analysed the economic consequences of birdwatching tourism, there is a scant studies that tried to address the following:

- **Conservation Awareness of Birdwatchers:** This study aims to investigate the distinctive attributes of birders, such as their extensive education and ecological expertise, and how this consciousness impacts their WTP.
- **Biodiversity rich Dihing-Patkai National Park:** Confining to one particular national park, the study introduces a more thorough examination of the local environment and the possible influence of birders' willingness to financial contribute towards conservation efforts.

This study tries to minimise a notable gap in the current study by providing a thorough understanding of how birdwatchers' heightened conservation awareness translates into more tangible financial assistance for supporting conservation initiatives in the biodiversity rich Dihing-Patkai Landscape.

### 3 Conceptual Framework:

Below mentioned is a conceptual framework that is being constructed to examine the diverse variables that affect birdwatchers' WTP for conservation initiatives, drawing from a comprehensive review of existing research:

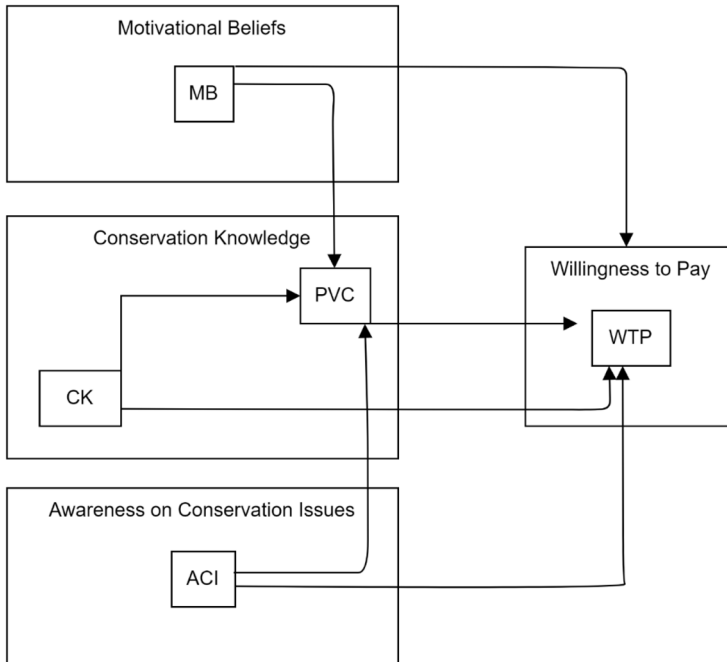


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The presented conceptual model depicts the interrelationships among various elements affecting a birdwatcher's WTP conservation initiatives. It emphasizes the interconnected nature of different variables and their collective impact on the final outcome.

The model comprises the following components:

#### Independent Variables:

1. **Awareness of Conservation Issues:** Comprehension of environmental challenges and the significance of conservation programs can directly affect WTP.
2. **Perceived Value for Conservation:** An individual's assessment of the worth and advantages of conservation efforts may influence their financial support willingness.
3. **Conservation Knowledge:** Grasping conservation principles and methods can boost individuals' appreciation for conservation endeavours and their readiness to contribute.

4. **Motivation for Birdwatching:** The motivations for engaging in birdwatching (e.g., nature appreciation, social interaction) can impact individuals' attitudes towards conservation and their willingness to pay.

**Dependent Variables:**

1. **Willingness to Pay (WTP):** The primary outcome of interest, signifying the amount individuals are prepared to pay to support conservation programs.

**4. Hypotheses of the Study:**

- H1:** Awareness on Conservation Issues (ACI) has positive impact on WTP.
- H2:** Perceived Value for Conservation (PVC) has positive impact on WTP.
- H3:** Conservation Knowledge (CK) has positive impact on WTP.
- H4:** Motivation for Birding (MB) have positive impact on WTP.

**5. Method:**

**5.1 Instrument:**

The sampling approach combined purposive and stratified random method. Purposive sampling targeted birdwatchers actively engaged in park activities, whereas stratified random sampling ensured demographic diversity. The study collected 240 valid responses, providing a representative sample of the bird-watching community.

Adapted scale items used in this study include awareness of Conservation Issues, Willingness to Pay, Perceived Value of Conservation, Conservation Knowledge, and Motivation for Bird watching. An online structured questionnaire was created using Google Forms consisting of closed ended questions on 5 variables of 24 questions. The statement under the five variables is presented below with the help of Table: 1.

**Table 1: Statements under Various Study Table**

Study Variables	Indicators	Statements	Source
Awareness of Conservation Issues	ACI - 1	I am aware of the conservation challenges faced by Dihing-Patkai National Park.	Tavárez et al., 2024
	ACI - 2	I believe that birdwatching tourism can contribute to conservation efforts.	
	ACI - 3	I am familiar with the importance of protecting biodiversity in the park.	
	ACI - 4	I understand the impact of climate change on the DPNP's ecosystem.	
	ACI - 5	I am aware of the threats posed by poaching and illegal logging in the park.	
Willingness to Pay	WTP - 1	Increased Park entrance fees	S. Wang et al., 2022
	WTP - 2	Donations to conservation organizations	
	WTP - 3	Participation in volunteer programs.	
	WTP - 5	Support for sustainable tourism initiatives.	
Perceived Value of Conservation	PVC - 1	Protecting biodiversity is essential for the well-being of future generations.	Cortés-Espino et al., 2023
	PVC - 2	Birdwatching tourism can have a positive impact on local communities.	

	PVC - 3	Conservation initiatives contribute to the overall health of the planet.	
	PVC - 4	I believe that Dihing-Patkai National Park is a valuable natural resource.	
Conservation Knowledge	CK - 1	Knowledge on Biodiversity	Batool et al., 2024c
	CK - 2	Knowledge on Habitat conservation	
	CK - 3	Knowledge on Endangered species	
	CK - 4	Knowledge on Climate Change	
	CK - 5	Knowledge on Sustainable Tourism	
Motivation for Birdwatching	MB - 1	Appreciation of nature	Randler & Großmann, 2022
	MB - 2	Learning about birds	
	MB - 3	Photography or videography	
	MB - 4	Social interaction	
	MB - 5	Relaxation and stress relief	
	MB - 6	Conservation	
	MB - 7	Personal Challenge	
	MB - 8	Adventure	

The study employed a five-point Likert Scale in its survey instrument. To validate the questionnaire, a preliminary survey was conducted with 60 individuals who had previously visited Dihing-Patkai N.P. To evaluate the internal consistency of the scales, Cronbach's Alpha was computed. The results indicated satisfactory levels of reliability, suggesting that the scales were measuring the intended constructs consistently.

**Table 2: Reliability Test**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha	N
.815	.840	24

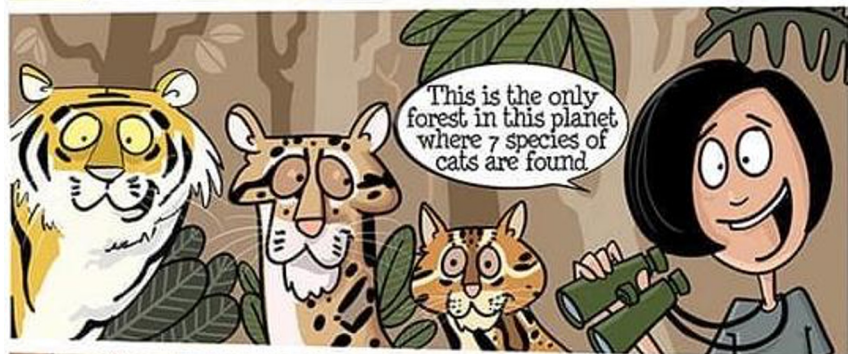
## 6. Study Area: The Dihing-Patkai National Park

Dihing-Patkai National Park, with an area of 235.6 km<sup>2</sup>, is an integral part of the greater Dehing-Patkai Elephant Reserve in Assam's Tinsukia and Dibrugarh districts spanning across 937 km<sup>2</sup>. This forest is the last remaining patch lowland tropical rainforest which is home to a notable number of globally threatened floral and faunal species. Recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by BirdLife International, the park is home to more than 300 species of birds, making it a global birdwatching hotspot[25]. The area is home to diverse range of wildlife, featuring close to 50 species of mammals, 47 types of reptiles, and 310 varieties of butterflies. Few notable mammalian species found in this forest include Bengal tiger, clouded leopard, Marbled cat, golden can, leopard cat, jungle cat, asiatic elephant, hoolock gibbon, Chinese pangolin, stamped-tailed macaque, capped langur, malayn sun bear, leopard, binturong, Assamese macaque, Bengal slow loris, etc. Dominant tree species include *Mesua ferrea*, *Shorea assamica*, *Michelia baillonii*, *Dipterocarpus retusus*, etc to name a few. The status of Dihing-Patkai was upgraded from a wildlife sanctuary to a national park in 2020 amidst a intense protest against illegal ongoing coal mining activities. This park's diverse ecosystem and conservation efforts highlight its global significance and the necessity for ongoing research and preservation[26].

The author has included original comic illustrations in this article to enhance readers' understanding of Dihing-Patkai National Park's ecosystem and biodiversity aiming to provide an appealing visual accompaniment to the scientific content and emphasizing the significance of conservation efforts.

## Sumu's Journey into the wilderness... DEHING-PATKAI RAINFOREST

Today I'll take you to the only rainforest of Assam, the Dehing-Patkai Rainforest! The name finds its origin from River Dehing, which is one of the tributaries of Mighty Brahmaputra and 'Patkai' the easternmost part of the Himalayas.





Image

3& 4: Comic Illustration on Dihing-Patkai (Illustrated by Deborshee Gogoi)

**7.0. Results and Discussions:**

To determine the various factors that influence birdwatchers’ willingness to pay for conservation efforts, the research introduces a multiple linear regression model. The study examines four independent variables those have a bearing on WTP. The analysis revealed statistically significant correlations and provided insights into how each of these factors contributes to predicting WTP.

**Table 3: Multiple Linear Regression Model**

Model	B		$\beta$	t	Sig.	95.0% CI for B		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
1	(Constant)	5.566	2.736		2.035	.049	.033	11.099
	ACI1	-.739	.289	-.932	-2.562	.014	-1.323	-.156
	ACI2	.552	.463	.498	1.193	.240	-.384	1.488
	ACI3	-.084	.419	-.071	-.201	.841	-.933	.764
	ACI4	-.181	.444	-.144	-.408	.685	-1.080	.717
	ACI5	1.142	.282	1.264	4.046	.000	.571	1.713
	PVC1	-1.368	.592	-.550	-2.309	.026	-2.565	-.170
	PVC2	-.463	.450	-.288	-1.027	.311	-1.374	.449
	PVC3	1.633	.486	.875	3.358	.002	.649	2.617
	PVC4	.021	.132	.024	.160	.873	-.246	.288
	PVC5	-.245	.200	-.242	-1.222	.229	-.650	.161
	CK1	-1.543	.481	-1.419	-3.207	.003	-2.516	-.570
	CK2	1.550	.641	1.447	2.418	.020	.254	2.847
	CK3	.081	.302	.080	.269	.790	-.530	.692
	CK4	-.113	.201	-.109	-.559	.579	-.520	.295
	CK5	-.371	.359	-.414	-1.034	.308	-1.097	.355
	MB2	-1.044	.451	-.632	-2.314	.026	-1.956	-.131
	MB3	-.593	.252	-.745	-2.352	.024	-1.103	-.083
MB4	-.164	.207	-.179	-.792	.433	-.583	.255	
MB5	.825	.611	.701	1.349	.185	-.412	2.061	
MB8	.769	.392	.603	1.961	.057	-.024	1.563	

a. Dependent Variable: WTP

The statistical analysis yields several significant findings. The intercept (B = 5.566, p = .049) suggests a notable baseline Willingness to Pay (WTP) of 5.566 when all independent variables are zero. Within the “**Awareness of Conservation Issues (ACI)**” category, ACI1 demonstrates a significant negative impact on WTP (B = -0.739, p = .014), indicating that increased awareness in this area might decrease WTP. Conversely, ACI5 shows a positive influence on WTP (B = 1.142, p < .001). Other ACI indicators did not reach statistical significance. In the “**Perceived Value of Conservation (PVC)**” realm, PVC1 negatively affects WTP (B = -1.368, p = .026), suggesting that higher perceived value could potentially reduce payment willingness. In contrast, PVC3 enhances WTP (B = 1.633, p = .002). The remaining PVC indicators were not statistically significant. “**Conservation Knowledge (CK)**” presents mixed outcomes, with CK1 significantly decreasing WTP (B = -1.543, p = .003), while CK2 positively influences it (B = 1.550, p = .020). However, CK3, CK4, and CK5 did not show significant effects. Finally, within the “**Motivation for Birdwatching (MB)**” category, both MB2 (B = -1.044, p = .026) and MB3 (B = -0.593, p = .024) negatively impact WTP, suggesting that certain birdwatching motivations may lower payment willingness. MB5 and MB8 exhibited positive but non-significant effects.

The study uncovers intricate connections between various factors and willingness to pay (WTP) for conservation efforts. Results indicate that certain aspects of **Awareness of Conservation Issues (ACI)** and **Perceived Value of Conservation (PVC)** have significant impacts on **WTP**, with both positive and

negative influences observed. **Conservation Knowledge (CK)**, while generally anticipated to enhance **WTP**, demonstrated varied effects, highlighting the complex role that knowledge plays in determining financial support for conservation initiatives. **Motivation for Birdwatching (MB)** was found to potentially reduce **WTP** in some instances, implying that personal enjoyment or experiences related to birdwatching may not always correlate with increased financial contributions to conservation causes.

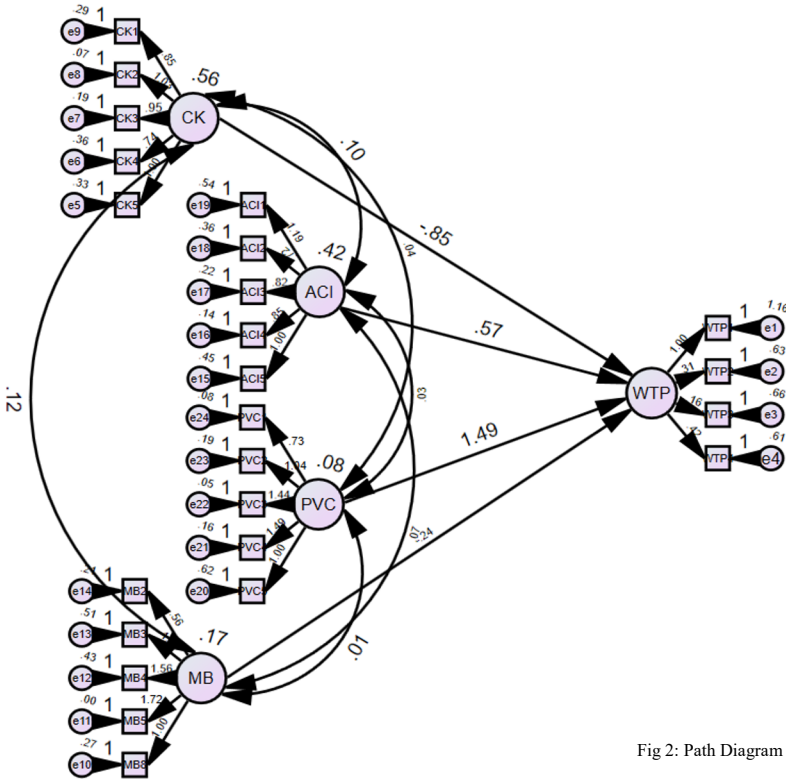


Fig 2: Path Diagram

A structural equation modelling (SEM) approach was introduced to investigate the intricate connections between conservation awareness, motivation, experience in birdwatching, and willingness to contribute financially among bird enthusiasts. The hypotheses were evaluated using the IBM SPSS AMOS 26 software.

**H1: Awareness on Conservation Issues (ACI) has positive impact on WTP.**

There is a statistically significant relationship between ACI and WTP, with a coefficient of 0.565 (S.E. =

0.116, C.R. = 4.890,  $p < .001$ ). This positive correlation supports hypothesis H1, suggesting that individuals who are more aware of conservation issues demonstrate a greater willingness to financially support conservation efforts. Consequently, an increase in ACI leads to a substantial increase in WTP.

### **H2: Perceived Value for Conservation (PVC) has a positive impact on WTP.**

Coefficient of 1.495 supports Hypothesis- H2, demonstrating that individuals who attribute greater value to conservation exhibit a significantly higher willingness to pay for conservation efforts.

### **H3: Conservation Knowledge (CK) has positive impact on WTP.**

A statistically significant negative correlation between conservation knowledge (CK) and willingness to pay (WTP), with a coefficient of -0.847 (S.E. = 0.111, C.R. = -7.630,  $p < .001$ ) contradicts the proposed hypothesis H3.

Interestingly, the study showed that people with greater understanding of conservation issues were less inclined to financially support conservation efforts. This unanticipated outcome implies that the link between knowledge and financial support is more complex than previously thought.

The findings suggest an inverse relationship between an individual's conservation knowledge and their WTP for conservation efforts. This unexpected correlation may be explained by several factors. Those with extensive conservation knowledge might develop increased skepticism or feel more capable of contributing through personal actions, thereby reducing their perceived need for financial support. Alternatively, individuals with higher conservation knowledge might be aware of non-monetary ways to support conservation, such as volunteering or advocating for policy changes, potentially minimising their willingness to financially contribute.

### **H4: Motivation for Birdwatching (MB) has positive impact on WTP.**

The Structural Equation Model (SEM) analysis indicates an unexpected negative correlation between Motivation for Birdwatching (MB) and Willingness to Pay (WTP), with a coefficient of -0.237. This relationship is statistically insignificant, as evidenced by a standard error of 0.159. As a result, we accept the null hypothesis, leading to the conclusion that MB does not significantly and positively influence WTP directly.

## **8. Conclusion:**

In conclusion, ACI and PVC positively contribute to WTP. The influence of Motivation for Birdwatching (MB) and a negative relationship between Conservation Knowledge (CK) and WTP is however not significant. These findings highlight the complicated nature of conservation-oriented behaviour, in that higher knowledge may in fact be negatively associated with financial contributions and that enthusiasm in birdwatching does not translate into cash to support conservation activities. These results are of great interest for conservation communicators, as they indicate that, when presented with conservation messages, sending a clear message to a broader public on the importance of protecting biodiversity may be more effective in eliciting financial support without the need to inform or motivate in recreational activities.

## **9. Future Scope:**

Future studies by examining additional factors influencing Willingness to Pay (WTP) for conservation, such as peer pressure, ecological awareness, and trust in conservation groups can broaden this investigation. This would offer a more detailed investigation about various elements influencing birders' willingness to pay.

Longitudinal research could keep a track on changing variables that have a bearing on WTP across time. Shedding light on the evolution of awareness, knowledge, and motivations. could reveal how local environmental issues and cultural values impact these relationships, enhancing the study's applicability. A more in-depth analysis of birdwatching motivations, including recreational, ecological, and scientific aspects, could provide more detailed insights into how personal interests correlate with conservation support. Exploring mediating or moderating effects, such as environmental attitudes or economic factors, could elucidate indirect pathways affecting WTP. Furthermore, investigating the impact of digital platforms, social media platforms on awareness, motivation, and ultimately, conservation funding can provide deeper insights into this complex behavioural dimension.

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